

Title: Curtin, Jeremiah & Alma (Cardell)

Call Number: Mss-0811

Inclusive Dates: 1827 – 1998

Bulk: 16.45 cu. ft. total

Location: LM, Sh. 088-097 (11.9 cu. ft.)
WH, CL95-96 (4.5 cu. ft.)
OS SM “C” (5 items)

Abstract: The collection offers a rare dual perspective on a unique 19th century couple; their social and business correspondence, together with Alma’s diaries, reveal the activities and reactions of a 19th century woman in a public world still thought to be the domain of men. At the same time, familial correspondence spanning three generations (from Alma’s grandmother down to Alma and her sister), over the course of 65 years, allows a glimpse of women’s domestic life and concerns in the last half of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th.

The collection is organized into seven series. See the scope and content note for a more specific description of the organizational structure.

Biographical Note: Jeremiah Curtin (1835-1906) was one of 19th-century America’s foremost ethnologists and linguists. Born in Detroit, he was brought to Milwaukee County as an infant. His family was among the earliest Irish settlers in the area, and their homestead is preserved as an historical landmark and museum in the present-day village of Greendale. Jeremiah spent his formative years in the Milwaukee area, attending Milwaukee University (a private high school) and Carroll College in Waukesha before leaving for Harvard in the fall of 1859.

Upon graduation from Harvard, Curtin spent a year in New York studying the law and languages. His particular interest in Russian secured for him an appointment, from President Lincoln, as Secretary to the United States legation to Russia in 1864; Curtin spent the next eight years in that position at St. Petersburg. In 1872, he arranged for and joined Russia’s Grand Duke Alexis’ visit to Milwaukee.

While on this trip, Curtin met and married Mary Alma Cardell (1847-1938), a Vermont-born teacher then working at a school in Madison. They spend the next 34 years together in a unique partnership. Alma returned to Russia with Jeremiah, where they tried to establish a timber business in the Crimea. With the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey in 1877, the Curtins abandoned their plans and returned to the United States. For the next four years, the Curtins lived in the Midwest, where Jeremiah lectured and worked on an encyclopedia for a Chicago firm.

In 1882, Curtin joined the staff of the Smithsonian Institution’s Bureau of Ethnology, where he specialized in collection vocabularies and myths of American Indian tribes. From then until Jeremiah’s death in 1906, the Curtins travelled extensively and continually, collection folklore from a variety of cultures (Russian, Irish, East European, Central American). In addition,

Jeremiah made extensive translations of popular European literature into English. In this capacity, he is the best known translator of the works of Nobel Prize-winning Polish author, Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose *Quo Vadis?* Was one of the most popular books in both Europe and the United States at the end of the 19th century.

Alma Curtin was herself fluent in Russian and French. In addition to assisting her husband in the collection of folktales and myths, she acted as his copyist and photographer. Following her husband's death, she prepared several of his manuscripts for publication, and wrote much of the account that was published in 1940 as *The Memoirs of Jeremiah Curtin*. She continued to travel within the United States, but lived with her family in Vermont until her death in 1938.

Scope and Content:

This collection covers primarily the period of the Curtins' married life from 1872 until Jeremiah's death in 1906. It is divided into seven series. The first series is Jeremiah Curtin's Materials, General and Miscellaneous. It includes working and finished copies of Curtin's Indian material (arranged by tribe and geographic area), and drafts and edited versions of the *Memoirs*. Early drafts are in Jeremiah Curtin's hand and contain information that Alma edited out in revised drafts prepared after his death. Curtin's account of his early life and aspects of his dispute with the U.S. Ambassador to Russia, Cassius Clay, are among the details that did not appear in the published version. The final edited transcript is also included. In addition, the first series includes Jeremiah's correspondence with family as well as business and social acquaintances. Except for brief postscripts to his wife's letters home, Curtin's correspondence with his own family after his years at Harvard was either very meager, has been lost, or has not yet come to public attention. He did, however, correspond with several noted figures of his day; of particular interest may be his correspondence with Russian artist Vassily Vereschagen and Polish author Henryk Sienkiewicz.

The second series is Jeremiah Curtin's Materials, Legends, Myths and Folktales. This series consists of materials relating to Jeremiah Curtin's writings on the customs, legends and beliefs of Native Americans and other previously ignored 19th century cultures. These materials afford the researcher a window on some of the vestiges of, and differences between, pre-industrial societies in both the United States and abroad. Moreover, read together with Alma Curtin's daily diary entries and letters, they help shed light on the work of the ethnographer and reveal the development of the social science of ethnography in its infancy.

The third series is Alma (Cardell) Curtin Materials. This series consists of Alma Curtin's diaries/journals, correspondence with her family and friends, and scrapbooks. James & Mary Cardell often co-wrote letters to the Curtins, as did Mary and Jennie Cardell Norton. The letters are arranged under the name of the person who opened the letter. The scrapbooks offer a wide range of clippings from around the world, covering the Curtins' activities and giving critical reaction to their published works.

The fourth series contains material compiled by the Milwaukee County Historical Society that pertain to the Curtins and the Curtin House in Greendale.

The fifth series is Miscellaneous Family Materials. This series contains diaries/journals as well as correspondence related to Jeremiah's and Alma's relatives: the Bugbee, Bradley, Cardell, Curtin, and Norton families. The correspondence is to/from various family members (other than Jeremiah and Alma which is included in their respective sections) and is arranged by the author

of the letter and there under chronologically. The dating and matching of this material, and indeed, of all the correspondence in the collection, was done on the basis of internal evidence, utilizing dates and information given in Alma Curtin's diaries, Jeremiah Curtin's *Memoirs*, and the Bugbee, Bradley, and Cardell family histories given by Alma Curtin. Since there is a margin of error with these letters, the researcher should use them with some caution.

The sixth series consists of an extensive collection of books which Jeremiah Curtin wrote and collected. This is his personal library, which is housed in the Cudahy Library at MCHS.

The seventh series consists of photographs—most of them probably taken by Alma Curtin—of family, friends, and various travels. The photos are arranged topically.

Administrative Info:

This collection was compiled from a number of sources. Some of the collection was donated by the Curtin family members. Other portions of the collection were purchased at auction. The collection was processed in 1999 by Judith A. Simosen and reprocessed in September 2004 by Kevin Abing. This finding aid was updated in July 2009.

Related Collections:

McShane/Curtin Papers, Mss 2645

Olson-Curtin Papers, Mss 2646

Series 1: Jeremiah Curtin Material, General/Miscellaneous	Box #	Folder #
Articles of Agreement Between Russia & Japan re: Korea, ca. 1905	1	1
Assorted Maps	1	2
Assorted Notes Copied from Jeremiah's Notebooks by Alma, n.d. (31 pages)	1	3
Assorted Notes – Fragments, n.d.	1	4
Assorted Notes (Handwritten), n.d.	1	5
Autobiographical Notes – Early Childhood Years (covers pp. 31-38 of <i>Memoirs</i>)	1	6
Autobiographical Notes – Preparing for College (in Alma's hand; copied from 1897 notes)	1	7
Autobiographical Notes – Curtin's Life, 1846-1873	1	8
Autobiographical Notes (Comprises pp. 201-06, 306-07, 323-36, & 469-72 of <i>Memoirs</i>)	1	9
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes/Meeting with Charles Dana (forms basis of chapter 30 of <i>Memoirs</i>)	1	10
Autobiographical Notes – Alma Curtin's Account of Meeting w/Leo Tolstoy & Travels in Russia (detailed background to material published in <i>Memoirs</i> pp. 783-815)	1	11
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes re: Russia (In Alma Curtin's Hand; Comprises roughly pp. 78-80, 103-128 of <i>Memoirs</i>)	1	12
Autobiographical Notes – Jeremiah & Alma Curtin's Itinerary, 1897-1904	1	13

Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes re: Ireland & Scotland [in both Alma’s & Jeremiah’s hands]	1	14
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes re: Siberia & Buriat Funeral [in Alma Curtin’s hand]	1	15
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes re: Siberia & Buriat Life [in Jeremiah Curtin’s hand]	1	16
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes/Alma’s Account of Russian Trip, 1873 [pp. 5-10 missing]	1	17
Autobiographical Notes – Notes on History of Manchus [in Jeremiah’s hand]	1	18
Autobiographical Notes – Travel Notes/Alma Curtin on Trip to Holy Land, ca. 1899	1	19
Autobiographical Notes re: Russia & Clay, pp. I-XV	1	20
Autobiographical Notes, pp. A-Z	1	21
Calling Cards – Miscellaneous (In Envelope)	1	22
Christmas Cards	1	23
Certificate (in Russian), 1904 [Note: in two pieces, very fragile]	OS SM “C”	
Compositions/Essays, ca. 1840s? (Jeremiah Curtin’s?)	1	24
Contemporary Articles & Reviews Collected by Curtin	1	25
Contracts with Vassily Vereschagen, n.d.	1	26
Diaries/Notebooks, 1896-1900 & Undated	1	27
Envelopes - Miscellaneous, Empty	1	28
Essay, “The Germanic Element in Civilization” [Harvard Composition?]	1	29
Family Histories – Curtin/Cardell/Bugbee/Bradley Families	1	30
Foreign Language Materials – Letters, Certificates, etc., ca. 1869-1906	2	31
Grain Business with Russian Government	2	32
Grand Duke Alexis in Milwaukee – Menu & Invitation, 1872	2	33
“Introductory Remarks & Biographical Sketch of Henryk Sienkiewicz,” 1897 (Draft of Curtin’s <i>Century Magazine</i> article)	2	34
Japanese Items from Travels	2	35
Jeremiah Curtin Monograph by Daniel F. Curtin	2	36
Letters Received – From Maude (Mathilda) Curtin [Jeremiah’s Sister, a nun], 1891 (letters to Jeremiah & Alma)	2	37
Letters Received – Re: Family Matters From People Outside the Family, 1879-1898	2	38
Letters Received – Social/Business – From John B. Alden (publisher), 1888	2	39
Letters Received – Social/Business – From Charles Dana (editor, <i>The Sun</i>), 1890-1896	2	40
Letters Received – Social/Business – From Porfirio Diaz (President of Mexico), 1895, 1897 [letters of introduction on Curtin’s behalf]	2	41
Letters Received – Social/Business – From John Fiske, 1878-1893	2	42
Letters Received – Social/Business – From John Hay (U.S. Secretary of State), 1900-1903 [letters of introduction on Curtin’s behalf]	2	43

Letters Received – Social/Business – From Little, Brown & Co. (publishers), 1892-1899	2	44
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Letters Received – Miscellaneous – J. G. Vore to Andrew Curtin re: Indian Affairs, April 5, 1886 (letter given to Jeremiah Curtin)	3	58
Letters Sent – To Alma (Cardell) Curtin [wife], 1872-1891	3	59
Letters Sent – To His Sister (From Harvard), 1860-1861	3	60
Letters Sent – To Morgan Furlong (cousin), 1855, 1859-1861	3	61
Letters Sent – To James & Mary (Bradley) Cardell [Parents-in-Law], 1872-1897	3	62
Letters Sent – To Lucretia (Bugbee) Bradley [Grandmother-in-Law], 1873-1877	3	63
Letters Sent – To Anson M. Norton (brother-in-law), 1899	3	64
Letters Sent – Social/Business – Assorted, 1885-1901	3	65
Letters Sent – Social/Business – To Little, Brown & Co. (Publishers), 1891-1902	3	66
Letters Sent – Social/Business – To Henry Sienkiewicz, 1901, 1904	3	67
Memoirs (manuscript – original), pp. 1-25 & pages re: John Fiske	3	68
Memoirs (manuscript), pp. 1-202 [In Alma Curtin’s Hand; pp. 31-317 in published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	69
Memoirs (manuscript), pp. 13-107 [pp. 356-476 in published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	70
Memoirs (manuscript), pp. 437, 475-720 [pp. 667-920 in published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	71
Memoirs (manuscript), p. 78 [pp. 142-43 of published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	72

Memoirs (manuscript) – “A Few Pages of Autobiography,” pp. 1, 326-327 [Comprising pp. 1, 478-81 of published <i>Memoirs</i> ; all in Alma Curtin’s hand]	3	73
Memoirs (manuscript), p. 36 [pp. 385, 399-400 of published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	74
Memoirs (manuscript), no page # [p. 450 in published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	75
Memoirs (manuscript) – draft [p. 359 in published <i>Memoirs</i>]	3	76
Memoirs (manuscript) – Last Page [in Alma Curtin’s hand]	3	77
Memoirs (manuscript) – pp. 691 & 720	3	78
Memoirs (typescript), pp. 1-300	3	79-80
Memoirs (typescript), pp. 301-827	4	81-84
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Mythology Lecture	4	87
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Newspaper Clippings re: Family Members, 1891-1955	4	90
Newspaper Clippings re: Visit of Grand Duke Alexis of Russia to Milwaukee & U.S., 1872	4	91
Newspaper Clippings re: Henryk Sienkiewicz, ca. 1914-1916	4	92
Newspaper Clippings – Russian & Polish, 1906-1907	4	93
Newspaper Clippings – Miscellaneous	4	94
Newspapers – <i>The Vicksburg (Miss.) Daily Citizen</i> , July 2, 1863 (Facsimile -last of the “wallpaper edition,” 2 days before surrender of southern army)	4	95
Notes on Mythology & Curtin’s Philosophy	4	96
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Publications Owned by Curtin, Preface to, with extracts, <i>A Book of the Beginnings</i> by Gerald Massey	4A	101
Publications Owned by Curtin, “Remarks on the Centres of Ancient Civilization in Central America,” by Dr. C. Hermann Berendt	4A	101
Publications Owned by Curtin, <i>Lucasen</i>	4A	101
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Tickets & Receipts from Various Travels	4A	105
Travel Memorabilia – General	4A	106
Will & Probate Records, 1898, 1907	4A	107
Working books, Prus, Boleslaw. (Alexander Glowacki). <i>Faraon</i> . Vol. III. Warsaw: Naklad Gebethnera I Wolffa, 1897. Notation by Curtin on p. 387, “Finished, Nov. 24, 1899,” in Polish	7A	Loose

Working books, Senkiewicz, Henryk. <i>Pisma</i> [Collected Writings]. - Tom. I: 294 pp., no covers. Includes “Stary Sluga,” “Szkice Weglem,” “Janko Muzykant,” and “Hania.”	7A	Loose
Working books, Senkiewicz, Henryk. <i>Pisma</i> [Collected Writings]. - Tom IV: 270 pp., no front cover. Includes “Przey Stepy,” “orso,” “Z pamietnika poznanskiego nauczyciela,” “Czyja wina?” & “Za chlebem.”	7A	Loose
Working books, Senkiewicz, Henryk. <i>Pisma</i> [Collected Writings]. - Tom. V: “Latarnik,” “Niewola Tatarsk,” “Jamiol,” “Najednkarte,” “Bartek Zwyciezca.”	7A	Loose
Working books, Senkiewicz, Henryk. <i>Pisma</i> [Collected Writings]. - Tom XX: “Wyrok Zeusa,” “Z Wrazen Wloskich,” “Organista Z Ponikly,” “U Zrodla,” “Lux in Tenebris Lucet,” “Badz Blogoslawiona!,” “Pojdzmy Aznim!,” “Listy O Zoll.” 212 pp.	7A	Loose
Working books, Senkiewicz, Henryk. <i>Potop</i> [The Deluge]. Warsaw: 1886. (Tom II only).	7A	Loose
Working books, Unknown. Polish Text, 242 pp., no covers, title, author, or date	7A	Loose
Working books, Unknown. “Tribal Names & Synonyms.” No publisher, n.d. 54 pp., no covers	7A	Loose
Series 2: Jeremiah Curtin’s Materials, Legends, Myths and Folktales	Box #	Folder #
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Letters Received – From William H. Cardell [Brother], 1882, 1886	10	178
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Letters Received – From Joanna Curtin [Jeremiah's Sister], 1872	10	180
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U.S. Government. <i>Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs</i> . 2 volumes. Washington: GPO, 1867.		
Wilson, Dale. "Editorial." <i>Historical Messenger</i> , vol. 8 (December 1952): 2.		
<i>Wisconsin Magazine of History</i> . Vol. 29, no. 2, December 1945.		
Series 7: Photographs	Box #	Folder #
Family and Friends		
Jeremiah Curtin	19	1-2
Alma (Cardell) Curtin	19	3
Curtin Family	19	3A
Drawings by Alma Curtin	19	3B
Cardell & Norton Family; Curtin Mausoleum	19	4
Cardell & Norton Family; Henryk Sienkiewicz (Negatives)	19	5
Henryk Sienkiewicz, Family, & Home (with Curtin)	19	6
Henryk Sienkiewicz, Family, & Home (with Curtin)	19	7
American & European Notables, Friends, & Acquaintances	19	8
6 contact proof sheets & 5 envelopes of negatives of photos of Cardell & Norton families, also Furlongs of Milwaukee	19	9 (envelope)
Photos of Jeremiah Curtin House, Greendale, WI, taken by Robert A. Norton (Alma Curtin's Grand-nephew) on visit to Milwaukee	19	10 (envelope)
Photos of Jeremiah Curtin Hall, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, taken By Robert A. Norton on visit to Milwaukee	19	11 (envelope)
Russian Photos		
Russia – Assorted Locales	20	12
Russian People	20	13
Siberia – Buriat Community	20	14
Siberia – Buriat People	20	15
Mongolian Masks	20	16
Russian Notables, Friends, & Acquaintances of the Curtins	20	17
Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Peace Conference, 1905	20	18
Russia (Negatives)	20	19
Irish Photos		
Aran Islands	21	20
Blasket Island	21	21

County Clare	21	22
County Cork	21	23
County Donegal	21	24
County Dublin	21	25
County Galway	21	26
County Kerry	21	27
Skellig Island	21	28
Tory Island	21	29
Ventry Strand	21	30
Ireland – Miscellaneous Locales	21	31
Ireland – Unidentified Locales	21	32
Ireland – Unidentified People	21	33
MCHS Prints of 35 Irish & Scottish Photos	21	34
MCHS Prints of 35 Irish & Scottish Photos	21	34A
MCHS Prints of 35 Irish & Scottish Photos	22	Loose
Other Locations		
Native American Communities (New York & California)	23	35
Canada	23	36
Egypt	23	37
Egypt	23	37A
France (including Monaco)	23	38
Germany	23	39
Greece	23	40
Guatamala	23	41
Holy Land	23	42
Italy (including museum photos of classical Roman statuary)	23	43
Mexico	23	44
Poland	23A	45
Spain	23A	46
Switzerland	23A	47
Unidentified People & Places	23A	48
Negatives of California & Canada	23A	49
Negatives of Austria, Sarajevo, Naples, & Others	23A	50
Miscellaneous Photos		
4 photo albums, primarily travel photos with some personal/family photos 1 photo album of Cardell family portraits	24	
33 glass plate negatives; primarily of Jeremiah Curtin but also travel photos	25	
Packet of Oversize Photos		CL W7
Curtin House Photos		
Photos – Curtin House 1902 & 1907 Alma Cardell Curtin photos & original negatives	26	51

Photos – Curtin House 1930's	26	52
Photos – Curtin House 1936 HABS photos and DAR meeting	26	53
Photos – Curtin House Ca. 1942 Albert Toepfer photos	26	54
Photos – Curtin House 1958-1962	26	55
Photos – Curtin House 1966-1967	26	56
Photos – Curtin House 1974 Jeremiah Curtin Cardell visit	26	57
Photos – Curtin House 1975	26	58
Photos – Curtin House 1975 MPS Milwaukee Public Schools Archeological Dig	26	59
Photos – Curtin House 1977 Restoration Work	26	60
Photos – Curtin House 1977 work, timber removal documentation	26	61
Photos – Curtin House 1978 MCHS Archeological Dig	26	62
Photos – Curtin House 1980 Restoration Work	26	63
Photos – Curtin House Opening/Dedication 1985	26	64
Photos – Curtin House Drawings/Models	26	65
Irish prototypes – Curtin House	26	66
Photos – Curtin House Furnishings (Contact Sheets)	26	67
Photos – Curtin House Exterior Views (Includes Negatives & Contact Sheets)	26	68
Photos – Curtin House – Miscellaneous Maps, Events, Negatives	26	69
Photos – “Brown-Toned” Photos for Use in Curtin House Slide Show	26	70